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ACTION IO-10

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

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INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 6248

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, UNGA, MV

SUBJECT: 30TH UNGA - MALDIVES' DELEGATION AND VOTING POSTURE

REF: COLOMBO 3183

1. SUMMARY: TWO-MAN MALDIVES' DELEGATION TO 30TH UNGA DEPARTED NEW YORK NOVEMBER 19 AS PLANNED EARLIER. MALDIVES' DELEGATES SEEMED WELL-DISPOSED TOWARD US AND WERE PLEASED WITH US INTEREST IN THEM. MALDIVES SUPPORTED OUR RESOLUTION ON KOREA AND ABSTAINED ON HOSTILE. THEY EXPLAINED DEPENDENCE ON ARABS FOR OIL AND CARGOES FOR THEIR MERCHANT FLEET AS A REASON FOR THEIR VOTE IN FAVOR OF ANTI-ZIONISM RESOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

2. TWO-MAN MALDIVIAN DELEGATION TO 30TH UNGA DEPARTED NEW YORK NOVEMBER 19. DEPARTURE WAS ONE MONTH PRIOR TO CONCLUSION OF GA, BUT BOTH DELEGATES HAD BEEN SAYING IN CONVERSATIONS WITH MISOFF SINCE EARLY OCTOBER THEY WOULD BE LEAVING EARLY. FINANCIAL REASONS PROBABLY CAUSE. DELEGATION CHIEF, K. AHMED ISMAIL, STATED HE WOULD RECOMMEND TO GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES (GOM) THAT DELEGATION BE SENT TO 31ST UNGA.

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3. BOTH DELEGATES ON NOVEMBER 13 EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN AND APPREHENSION TO MISOFF ABOUT POSSIBLE USG REACTION TO THE MALDIVES' LINE-UP WITH THE ARABS ON "ZIONISM IS RACISM" RESOLUTION IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTE. (COMMENT: MALDIVES DID NOT VOTE IN COMMITTEE THREE BUT VOTED FOR ARAB RESOLUTION IN PLENARY.) THEY HAD HEARD NEWS BROADCAST STATING WHITE HOUSE CONSIDERING PUNITIVE ACTION AGAINST COUNTRIES WHICH VOTED WITH ARABS ON ZIONISM RESOLUTION, BUT NOT AGAINST ARAB STATES THEMSELVES.

4. THE TWO DELEGATES STATED THEY HOPED US WOULD UNDERSTAND THEIR SITUATION. THEY REITERATED THAT THE MALDIVES ARE DEPENDENT ON ARAB GOODWILL FOR OIL AND CARGOES FOR THEIR MERCHANT MARINE. THEY EXPLAINED THAT THE MALDIVES FELT NO ANTI-SEMITISM BUT SUPPORTED THE ARAB VIEW REGARDING ARAB TERRITORIES OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL. ARAB PRESSURE ON THE MALDIVES' DELEGATION TO VOTE FOR THE "ZIONISM IS RACISM" RESOLUTION HAD BEEN GREAT, THEY INSISTED, ALMOST PLAINTIVELY. THEY APPEARED SINCERELY TO REGRET THAT "ZIONISM" HAD BECOME SUCH AN ISSUE OF PASSION AND SAID THAT IT WAS INTERFERING WITH SUBJECTS THEY CONSIDERED MORE IMPORTANT, SUCH AS DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

5. EARLIER, MISOFF, IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL, ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH ISMAIL AND HIS COLLEAGUE, MAUMOON ABDUL GAYOOM. AT MID-OCTOBER LUNCHEON, THE TWO SEEMED MOST APPRECIATIVE OF US INTEREST IN THEIR PRESENCE AT THE UN. IN WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION ABOUT THE MALDIVES' INTERESTS AND DEVELOPMENT THEY MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. MALDIVES' ROLE AT UN OVERWHELMINGLY FOCUSED ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASPECTS. THERE IS GENERAL UNWILLINGNESS TO GET INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS. THE MALDIVES DO NOT CONSIDER SELVES AS PART OF "NON-ALIGNED" GROUP. WILLING TO CONSIDER ECONOMIC AID FROM ANY SOURCE, BUT "TERMS MUST BE RIGHT."

B. "OUR PRESIDENT (IBRAHIM NASIR) IS A GENIUS. HE WILL DO ANYTHING IN BUSINESS THAT IS OF DIRECT BENEFIT TO THE COUNTRY," SAID ISMAIL. THE MALDIVES DO NOT LIKE GOVERNMENT LOANS. THEY PREFER BANK LOANS WHERE THERE IS "DEEP MUTUAL CONFIDENTIAL

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TRUST" ON BOTH SIDES.

C. THE MALDIVES ARE MUCH INTERESTED IN "SLOW, CONTROLLED" ECONOMIC GROWTH. THE GOM LIKED VERY MUCH THE SPEECH OF SECRETARY KISSINGER AT THE UNGA SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION. ISMAIL SAID GOM LIKED "ALL ASPECTS," OF THE SPEECH AND HE WOULD NOT SINGLE OUT ANY SINGLE ITEM AS OF SPECIAL INTEREST.

D. ON INTERNAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BOTH MEN SEEMED PLEASED WITH JAPANESE LOAN FOR MODERNIZATION OF THE MALDIVES FISHING COMPANY. (COMMENT: APPARENTLY INSTALLATION ENGINES IN SAILING VESSELS.) THE MALDIVES' INTENT IS TO MAKE FISHING AGAIN THE FIRST BUSINESS OF THE COUNTRY IN LIEU OF SHIPPING. TUNA BREEDING GROUNDS ARE IN EXCELLENT CONDITION, AND FISH SUPPLY GREATER THAN EVER. JAPAN IS IMPORTING LARGE QUANTITIES DRIED FISH FROM MALDIVES, WHICH IS IMPORTANT FACTOR IN MALDIVES ECONOMY.

E. LACK OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL IS SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR GOM IN TERMS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. MALDIVES SENDING STUDENTS ABROAD UNDER COLOMBO PLAN. AUSTRALIA IS FAVORED FOR STUDENTS, BUT OTHERS BEING SENT TO INDIA AND SRI LANKA. UNFORTUNATELY, SOME OF THESE STUDENTS HAVE DECLINED TO RETURN TO MALDIVES AFTER COMPLETING EDUCATION. THIS "BRAIN DRAIN" REMAINS MATTER OF CONCERN FOR GOM.

F. IN POLITICAL AREA, ISMAIL FELT THAT NEITHER INDIA, USSR OR CHINA IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN MALDIVES AT THIS TIME. THRUST OF HIS REMARKS WAS THAT MALDIVES MAKE OWN FOREIGN POLICY WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH ANYONE. THERE WERE INDIRECT INDICATIONS OF SATISFACTION THAT THE MALDIVES' ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON SRI LANKA, WITH CONCOMITTANT POLITICAL PRESSURE POTENTIAL WAS FADING. ACCORDING TO OUR NEW ZEALAND COLLEAGUES, THE MALDIVES' REPRESENTATIVES LOOKED UPON AUSTRALIA'S DELEGATION AS THEIR "BIG BROTHERS" DURING THE UNGA.

G. ISMAIL WAS STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF US DEVELOPMENT OF DIEGO SUAREZ AS MILITARY/NAVAL BASE. THIS WAS PERHAPS PRIVATE OPINION, RATHER THAN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POLICY. JUDGING FROM ISMAIL'S REMARKS, HE CONSIDERED AN AMERICAN PRESENCE ON DIEGO SUAREZ A STABILIZING FACTOR IN THE REGION.

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H. BOTH EXPRESSED GREAT SATISFACTION THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE MALDIVES ARE ESSENTIALLY OF ONE RACE, ONE RELIGION, AND HAVE A COMMON LANGUAGE. THUS, ISMAIL FELT THE MALDIVES NOT SUBJECT TO RHETORIC OF RADICAL THIRD WORLD STATES. (COMMENT: THEIR CONFIDENCE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN MISPLACED IN VIEW OF THE SUBSEQUENT SAVAGING THEY GOT FROM THE ARAB STATES TO SUPPORT THE ZIONISM RESOLUTION.)

6. LIMITED BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED:

(A) K. AHMED ISMAIL DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS UNDER-SECRETARY AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, FUNCTIONING PRIMARILY AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISER TO THE PRESIDENT. HE GOT HIS UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA, CIRCA 1960-64, BEING

MEMBER OF FIRST GROUP OF MALDIVES STUDENTS SENT TO COLOMBO.
HE HEDGED ON DESCRIBING HIS EDUCATION, NOTING THAT HE IS NOT
AN ECONOMIST, "BUT MY FATHER IS A BUSEINESMAN."

(B) MAUMOON ABDUL GAYOOM, DEPUTY HEAD OF MISSION,
MALDIVE EMBASSY SRI LANKA, STUDIED IN EGYPT. HIS SUBJECTS
INCLUDED BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND CIVIL LAW, BUT HE IS NOT
QUALIFIED TO PRACTICE LAW. HE SPEAKS ARABIC. HE VISITED
LIBYA, 1969. BOTH MEN APPEAR TO BE PRACTICING MUSLIMS;
NEITHER ACCEPTED ALCOHOL.

7. THE MALDIVES' VOTING ON THE KOREAN RESOLUTIONS IN THE 30TH
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOLLOWS:

(A) COMMITTEE ONE: SUPPORTED US-COSPONSORED RESOLUTION ON
PRIORITY AND SUBSTANCE; ABSTAINED ON COMMUNIST-SPONSORED
RESOLUTION.

(B) PLENARY: SUPPORTED US-SPONSORED RESOLUTION; ABSTAINED
ON HOSTILE.

(COMMENT: AS NOTED REFTEL, THE MALDIVES HAVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
WITH BOTH KOREAS. THUS THEY DID MORE THAN REMAIN NEUTRAL
ON THIS ITEM. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE AUSTRALIANS MAY HAVE
BEEN ESPECIALLY INSTRUMENTAL IN GETTING THE MALDIVES TO VOTE
FOR OUR RESOLUTION.)
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